

ON THE 1608/459.
Perseverance of the Saints,

A
SERMON:

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED,
A FEW OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
FORMULA.

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SERMON:

A NEW OBSERVATION

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PREFACE.

AT a season when so many disputes are agitated, and new opinions are embraced, the following pages are humbly submitted to the consideration of the candid, and unbiaſſed reader : not from any unusual fondneſs in the publiſher, in being an author, but from a ſincere deſire of doing good ; and if any hint is dropt that may have a tendency to bring the ſcattered flock of Chriſt to a right underſtanding, and to ſeek after the things that make for peace, in conſiſtency with truth, the deſign of bringing them to public view is fully answered—the author has ſtudied to avoid as much as poſſible any expreſſions that might occaſion irritation, and would rejoice if a regular plan was found out to cement the friends of truth ; not of one, but ſeveral denominations of profeſſing Chriſtians, as a powerful check to the infidelity of the avowed enemies of religion ; and as a ſure evidence that the real lovers of the peace, and proſperity of Zion, are not influenced by a falſe zeal on the one hand, and would deſire to guard againſt a licentious ſpirit on the other.

In controverſy, it is abſurd to ſtretch matters to the utmoſt extremity, while there is ſeldom any deſire to gain thoſe who differ in opinion—in heaven there will be no miſunderſtand-

ing, nor misrepresentation. Although the friends of our Lord Jesus Christ should in this imperfect state differ in opinion, let them not differ in affection till the happy period when they shall see eye to eye in the things of God.



S E R M O N.

JOB, xvii Chapter, 9 Verse.

The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

VARIOUS are the changes the saint has to undergo, as to his lot and outward circumstances, while in the wilderness of this world; sometimes he is favoured with the smiles of prosperity, and his heart is filled with joy on the receipt of the indulgent gifts of providence; the visitations of the Almighty preserves him, and his gentleness makes him to grow; the candle of the Lord shines around his head and tabernacle, and he has every reason to rejoice with those that do rejoice. At other seasons, we find him struggling with discouragements many, under the frowns of adversity, and painful affliction; he is as a broken vessel, and forgotten as a dead man, as one out of mind; his eye is dim, by reason of sorrow, and all his members as a shadow; whatever alterations happen, as to his outward circumstances, and whatever change take place as to his experience, there is no change in his state. He that hath begun the good work, shall perform and maintain it until the day of Jesus. The righteous also shall hold on his way.

In discoursing on this subject, the method proposed is, in the first place, To describe the character here specified—the righteous; 2dly, Point out some of these ways, in which the Christian may be said to walk in, or hold on; 3dly, Assign a few reasons for his holding on in this way, or in other words, adduce some scriptural arguments for establishing this truth, contained in the text; then conclude with some improvement.

We are, according to this arrangement, (1st) to describe the character of the righteous. The righteous man is one who is interested in the righteousness of the Glorious Surety, as the foundation of his hope and comfort: he has no accomplishment of his own to boast of, no righteousness to spin out of his own endeavours, as a matter or ground of justification, for his goodness extendeth not unto the Lord. If we have no interest in the perfect unchangeable righteousness of the Surety, disappointment must ensue every false confidence; every other refuge must be a refuge of lies; for all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, we fade as the leaf, and our iniquities, as the wind, have carried us away. Distrusting therefore, every other source of relief, and no longer venturing to draw water out of his own cistern, the gracious soul rests his all with unshaken, unsuspecting confidence, on the blessed Jesus, and his finished work, as the only hope set before him in the gospel.



Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness, and in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory. The attire of human invention will prove a garment too short, and a covering too narrow to answer the demands of the exceeding broad commandment; every attempt to establish the merit of fallen man is to multiply words without knowledge; every exertion used to blend our imperfect services with the unspotted righteousness of the Saviour, is a presumptuous vailing the importance of his work, which breeds so much admiration, and a manifest endeavour to rob him of the glory of it; but while the righteous man is self-debased, and self-condemned, and considers every plea of human merit as unavailing, however strongly supported by the golden sayings of the tongue, he places all his trust in that righteousness which is witnessed by the law and prophets, which alone is sufficient to cover every stain of guilt, and to raise him to the highest and noblest preferment: hence follow the triumphs of faith used by the church,—In thy name we will rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness we will be exalted.

2dly, The righteous man is one who is born again; circumcised with the circumcision made without hands. Neither the external sign of circumcision (in the fulness of gospel times) availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, *i. e.* the want of this

rite, held formerly in such high account, availeth not any thing, but the new creature. Let the pride of human merit be laid in the dust, and the vain boasts of self-sufficiency be for ever silenced! What amiable virtues can proceed from a heart full of all unrighteousness, and pollution, till regenerated by the spirit and grace of God? Not of works, lest any man should boast; and again, not by works of righteousness we have done, but according to his mercy, he hath saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed abundantly on us by Jesus Christ, our Lord. The gracious person is first renewed in the spirit of his mind, and then proves and approves of the good and perfect and acceptable will of God. He is first cast into a gospel mould, and then takes the yoke of Christ, which is easy, and his burden, which is light; and learns of him who is meek, and lowly in heart. The old man is put off, which is corrupt; and the new man is put on, which, after God, is created in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.

3dly, The righteous man is one who lives in the exercise of the graces of the Holy Spirit: he not only possesses the graces of the Spirit, as the good seed, sown in good ground, but finds the benefit and comfort of them realized in daily experience. He sanctifies the Lord Jehovah in his mind, and makes him his fear and dread.

Does the righteous man go into the house of God?—he is more concerned to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools. Is he employed in the duties and services of the Christian life?—he is concerned that he may worship the Lord with reverence and godly fear; and this principle he carries about with him in the labours of common life; and when enjoying the pleasures of social intercourse, he stands in awe that he may not offend, and sets a watch on the door of his lips, especially when the wicked are before him. As a dutiful son is concerned to honour a loving father, and fears lest he disoblige him; thus the child of God is grieved when his Father, who is in heaven, is at any time offended by his folly, and preserves a holy circumspection, lest he turn the grace of God into lasciviousness: shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. Rom. vi. 1, 2. Happy is the man that thus feareth always.

Moreover the righteous man is one who lives a life of faith on the Son of God. The just shall live by faith; and this subject is not a blind conjecture, or matter of bare speculation, but a blessed reality, founded on infallible testimony. Faith is the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for.

It is not enough that we say we are persuaded of the truth of the gospel, or that we say we are well pleased with the precious tidings it brings to our ears; without

faith to appropriate, claim, and apply the blessings of salvation, freely presented and given to us therein, it is impossible to please God; and this faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.

The Christian's evidences may be not seldom darkened, by reason of the inroads of sin and self; a deceived heart may turn him aside that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? but he will certainly have most satisfaction, comfort and peace, when he lives by faith and not by sight. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, and there is all peace and joy in believing.

2d, He loves the Lord: faith works by love: as a good tree bringeth forth good fruit, so a heart regenerated by the grace of God brings forth the good fruits of righteousness, to the praise of free grace.

It is the genuine character of all saints that they love the Lord: they love the Lord not in word, or tongue, but in deed, sincerity, and in truth. The desire of our soul (said the church in former days) is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee; and this love will lead you out to long for God in the dry and thirsty land of this wilderness: it will incline you not only to go to the altar of God, but to God your exceeding joy; and to seek after the pure, rational, sublime, and substantial pleasures, that flow down from a fellowship with the

Father of mercies, and his son Jesus Christ. This love will lead you, with adoring gratitude, to make mention of all the great and good things he hath been pleased to reveal and make known unto you; it will dispose you to think of his loving kindness in the midst of the temple; to love what he loves, and to admire the gifts and fruits of his love. We love him because he first loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins; and if God spared not his own Son, but gave him up unto the death for us all, shall he not with him also freely give us all things. Love remains not an idle spectator of all the great and good things the Lord is pleased to reveal, but it calls up every generous sentiment to praise God for his loving kindness and tender mercies.

4th, The righteous man is one who has frequent struggles and contendings with indwelling sin, and this conflict he may expect will continue till the latest moments of his existence here. He hath not attained, neither is already perfect: sin, like the Canaanite, still remains with him to harass and to trouble his repose; I see therefore another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Rom. vii. 23, 24.

Grace and corruption, like two comba-

tants that hath taken the field, will each strive for the mastery: the spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit; these are contrary the one to the other.

Sometimes victory seems to hover on the one side, and sometimes on the other; for after many wounds given by the Christian to his corruptions, in the right use of his spiritual armour, they will continue still to spring up as an enemy but half overcome, and occasion fresh scenes of uneasiness, shame, and grief; nevertheless by the good hand of God upon his people, and his grace made sufficient for them, victory will declare at last for them, and they shall be more than conquerors through him that loved them; they shall have good cause to thank God for triumphs over sin, as well as every other enemy of the soul; for they not only came forth out of great tribulation, but overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

5th, The righteous man is one who attends to all the ordinances and appointments of God: We are all present (said Cornelius, who was a just and devout man)—we are all present to hear what the Lord will say unto us: he will speak peace unto his saints, and to his people, and let them not return unto folly. If the authority of God makes no impression on our minds and con-

sciences, we are yet in our sins, and cannot please God.

The second head in our method was to speak of some of these ways wherein we should walk or hold on in ;—and in the first place, Christ is the chief of the ways of God, hence says he, John xiv. 6. I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me, and without me ye can do nothing. He is the way in which God graciously condescends to visit us, and in which our souls approach to the living God. The venerable Patriarchs seem to have been no strangers to this way: They saw his day afar off, and were glad; they accepted of him as the way of heaven's appointment; and is it not safe and profitable for you, O Christian! to imitate the same example, and tread in the same path? for there is none other name given among men, whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus. In holding on this way you shall tread on the adder and young lion; no evil shall befall you, no plague shall come near your dwelling: difficulties shall be surmounted, corruptions subdued, temptations, however strong, shall be resisted, darkness shall be made light, and crooked paths straight, your sorrows many shall be turned into joys, and you shall walk on safely and comfortably: he is the new and living way who is come that we might have life, and that more abundantly; and believing in him, and holding fast our confidence in him unto

the end, you shall be saved; he that endureth unto the end shall be saved.

2dly, An uniform and steady regard to the truth, as it is in Jesus, is another track of this way in which the righteous are to hold on. Priscilla and Aquilla having found Apollos, instructed him in the way of the Lord more perfectly. They were at great pains to give him a more clear and enlarged view of the mysteries of the Gospel, the important doctrines necessary to be known and believed; and their labours of love were not vain in the Lord. Such as love our Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth, will love the instructions contained in the doctrines of his holy word, and will follow on to know him, with encreasing ardour of desire; then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord. A vehement thirst after the various branches of human literature, is a promising symptom, and lays a foundation to hope that knowledge may be attained; and is it not laudable to shew an earnest desire to encrease in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? It may also be considered as a favourable symptom of prosperity to Zion, when we see others lifting up their voice for wisdom, and searching for knowledge as for hid treasure.

3 John i. 3, 4. For I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth; I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

3dly, A firm attachment to the law of God, as a rule of life and manners, demonstrate that we hold on in the way of the righteous.

O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day; more to be desired are they than gold, sweeter than honey from the honey-comb. Does the Christian pray that the Lord may teach him the way of his statutes? it is, that he may observe and keep it to the end. Make me, he adds, to go in the paths of thy commandments, for therein do I delight. The righteous man considers himself as under every obligation to honour and serve the Lord fully, by a dutiful regard to his law. I have esteemed (said holy Job) the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food. Shall we make void the law through faith? God forbid; nay, we establish the law. So far does the doctrine, contained in the text, give any encouragement to vanity or lasciviousness, that it furnishes us with the best motives to a steady and uniform regard to the holy and righteous law of God, and engages us to walk before God unto all pleasing. The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us to be denied to ungodliness, &c.

4thly, A love to personal holiness may be considered as a track of this way. Who is it that has an interest in the righteousness of the glorious Surety, and will not take pleasure in personal holiness?

The seeds of every grace being implanted in the day of power, the righteous shall grow up and flourish in God's holy place ; like a fruit-bearing tree he will bring forth the fruits of righteousness in the various branches of personal holiness.

He will study to exemplify every amiable virtue, and cherish every holy disposition and temper of mind, in obedience to the heavenly mandate. Be ye holy as God is holy, and as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.--A perfection of holiness, O ye saints of the living God ! is not your attainment on the footstool ; nevertheless, holiness ought to be your study, your aim, and delight, for without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

The third thing is to point out the encouragements to hold on in this way, or offer some scriptural arguments to prove that the saint, or the righteous man, shall hold on his way. 1st, The righteous shall hold on his way, for he is set apart in the counsels and wise purposes of Jehovah for this end. Psal. iv. 3. But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself. They are from eternity chosen in Christ, that they should be without blame before him in love, and prove vessels of honour, which are prepared and made meet for the Master's use ; and they are chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit,

and belief of the truth. Israel was chosen above all other nations, to be a peculiar people to the Lord, and to put his name there: Are not the saints of the living God a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, to shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of the kingdom of darkness, to his marvellous light?

2dly, The promises which are given for our strong consolation, assure us, that the righteous shall hold on his way. One good word that the Lord hath spoken, in his word of promise, shall not fall to the ground, nor return to him void or empty. Is faithfulness the girdle of Jehovah's loins, and righteousness the girdle of his reins, and will he not give you according to the truth of his promises, O Christian! and make your way prosperous? A variety of events and changes in outward things you may witness from day to day; but his unchanging faithfulness in the promise is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever: he will rest in his love, he will rejoice over you with joy and singing. Parents may change in that love which they owe to their children, and masters in the affection that is due to their servants; but God will not change in his love to his people. I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with tender mercies have I called thee; and having loved his own, he loves them unto the end. The believer may sometimes lose his hold of the promise, but it is

glad tidings of great joy, that God in his faithfulness, and love, and pity, will not lose his hold of him ! The gifts and callings of our God are without repentance.

3dly, The perfections of Jehovah are a noble guardian to the righteous ; a perfect security that the righteous shall hold on his way. His power and faithfulness, his wisdom and goodness, are ever employed for their safety ; therefore shall they dwell on high, and the place of their defence shall be the munition of rocks. Never was any city so well defended with walls and ramparts as the righteous are : Walk about Zion, and go round, mark her bulwarks, and tell the high towers thereof ; God is known for a refuge in the midst of her ; and, as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord around them that fear him. What although they should fall with others in the common calamity ? no evil is determined against their state, for their soul they shall have for a prey in the day of the Lord : the arm of Omnipotence being around them, no evil shall befall them, nor plague shall come nigh their dwelling. The Lord is our defence, who saves the upright.

4th, The unremitting care of Providence is ever exercised towards them, therefore they shall hold on their way : Does one hair of their head not fall to the ground without his observation, and shall he not attend to their best interests in the most important

concerns? He who keepeth Israel slumbers not, and neither doth he sleep; therefore the sun shall not smite them by day, nor the moon by night; his watchful providence being ever exercised, although outward dangers and temptations come like one rolling wave on the back of another, they shall be in safety from the subtle fowler's snare and the noisome pestilence, and shall possess their souls in patience; the good hand of God being upon them they shall go forward; tho' tribulations and alarming dangers, like inaccessible mountains, are on every side, they shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as on eagles—shall run without wearying, and walk without fainting.

5th, The great Redeemer shed his precious blood that he might secure this invaluable blessing unto them. He gave himself for them that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people. Are they the travail of his soul, whom he shall see and be satisfied in—his portion and peculiar treasure; and shall he suffer them to become a prey to their spiritual foes, so as to be finally overcome by them? John xvii. 12. Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the scriptures might be fulfilled. In the moments of sudden despondency the saints may be ready to adopt the language of the church of old, and say, The waters had overwhelmed us,

the stream had gone over our soul ; then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Psal. cxxiv. 4. 5. But they shall again resume their confidence in God, and in the triumphs of faith have reason to say, Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us a prey to their teeth : our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler ; the snare is broken, and we are escaped.

6th, The inhabitation of the spirit is a certain pledge that they shall hold on their way, for they are kept by almighty power through faith unto salvation. As some fountains continue to flow and live in all the seasons of the year, so the spirit is a continued source of holiness and comfort unto the righteous, therefore shall they go from strength to strength unwearied till they appear before God in Zion. They have not received the spirit of this world, but the spirit which is of God. He shall be with them and in them, as a well of living water, springing up unto eternal life. The spirit of God and of glory rests upon them, and his sanctifying influences, necessary supplies and aids, shall not be denied them ; these will be a present help in time of need, therefore shall they continue to hold on their way.

7th, They have an interest in the intercessory prayers of their great atoning High Priest, therefore shall they hold on their way. All their exertions in duty, and their feeble endeavours, would be unavailing as chaff and stubble, but the great Redcemer

prays that their faith may not fail: I pray not that thou wouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil, John xvii. 15. To shew that these intercessory prayers are by no means limited to his disciples, nor immediate followers, he adds, ver. 20. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe in me through their word;—and we are sure that him the father heareth always. Therefore every accusation brought against them by sin, satan, and the world, shall be happily silenced; no weapon formed against them shall ever prosper, and every tongue that riseth against them in judgment he will condemn, &c.

Inference 1st, See that, although the saints may have partial falls, they shall not fall finally nor irrevocably; the righteous may indeed fall seven times a day, yet the Lord will lift him up; therefore may they say, Neither height, nor depth, things present, nor things to come, shall separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. It is possible for them to fall from certain measures of holiness and comfort, and past attainments, but they shall never fall from a gracious state; therefore, let them not cast away their confidence, but in hope believe against hope. When they walk in darkness, and have no light, let them trust in the Lord and stay themselves on the mighty God of Jacob.

2dly, Learn what a noble source of relief

the saints, and people of God, have, in the moments of discouragement, when many troubles fill their soul, and laboring thoughts fret and discompose their minds; though perplexed they are not in despair—though they may seem to be neglected in the providence of God, they are not forsaken; He that hath begun the good work, shall perform it, until the day of Jesus; He who performs all things most perfectly, will maintain their souls in life, and keep their feet from falling, for a good man's footsteps are ordered by the Lord; he keepeth the feet of his saints, therefore, being quickened by the adoring views of his mercy, and animated by his love, they shall have their fruit unto holiness, and their end everlasting life. It is not said he *may*, but *shall* hold on his way; he shall do it notwithstanding of corruptions raging within, and temptations without. Learn, 3dly, in order to persevere in the way of holiness, to beware of yielding up any precious truth you have received, which may be useful to you in the way you are to hold on. Although, in your attachment to the truth, you may be branded with the odious names of bigot, enthusiast, hypocrite, and what not, it has been the common lot of the saints to be reviled in these forms, and nothing has befallen you but what is common to others. Bigotry may be considered as an over-fond attachment to any false system, or opinion, not supported by the word of God, and tenaciously adhering thereto, because others may have done so.

Such as are most ready to charge others with bigotry, would do well to take care lest the blame should not be too justly affixed to themselves. The opinions, which are likely to be the most popular, and are vented with so much art and address, were keenly supported by Glafs, and others, long ago, who also denied the appropriation. It is not men, however noted for abilities, that you are to adhere to, or follow, O ye saints of the living God ! but the pattern shewn on the mount, and men, only in so far as they are followers of Christ ; for not many wise men after the flesh are called, &c.

[Anecdote on reading of the Bible and the formula corresponding to it : “ I have before me a book, which has made many an attentive reader of it wise and happy, why may not I reap like benefit from it ?—This is the map of the country through which I am travelling to the celestial city—the compass by which I am to steer my course over the tempestuous ocean of human life—the brook of which I am to drink in my way, and lift up my head—the bread of life sent down from heaven to strengthen my heart, and the pleasant song by which I may beguile the passing hours in the house of my pilgrimage.”—STERNE.]

After retiring from private devotion, it would be very becoming in the professed friend of our Lord Jesus Christ to read a

portion of the word of God morning and evening ; it will, under the divine blessing, be your light in darkness, your unfailing source of joy when discouraged, your guide and companion in the different tracts of life, when many are ruining themselves by contention, pride and envy : O read the word of God, which will teach you to abound in love to him, and to the souls of your fellow men. Although the plan has not yet been found out for uniting the scattered flock of Christ, we are assured the time to favour Zion will yet come.

What is alledged against the old formula appears to me to be founded on mistake, and the late attempts used by two large dissenting bodies, to depreciate the worth of their ancestors, and to palm upon them sentiments they never imbibed, as can easily be made appear from their own proceedings (see Dundas's Acts of Assembly throughout,) and also from the general tenor of their conduct; comparing one part with another. It must follow then that the many arguments used of late against our subordinate standards go for nothing, and can prove nothing, as the framers of them take that for granted which is not allowed. Nevertheless, some godly persons may have consented (without duly weighing the matter) to admit of alterations, and to new-model the formula, with a design to promote the more general unity, and concord, of the church of Christ. It was easy to see, however, from the begin-

ing of these unhappy disputes, that they would have the very contrary effect. The form of expression, used in the new formula, and the preamble, which is a re-echo thereof, being so doubtful, and giving no certain sound, they must have been the occasion of much stumbling ; nor can they be long satisfactory to their professed votaries or others, who would wish to abide in church fellowship with them. As no explications have been allowed, we are left in doubt what to think ; but surely every thing that is admitted as a term of communion, ought to be in language plain and undisguised, and supported with a *Thus saith the Lord*. From the violent manner in which the preamble has been pushed in by a vote in one of their courts, in opposition to the many petitions and remonstrances presented against the same, one would be tempted to think, that some hidden scheme is upon the carpet never formerly divulged in the Secession ; but as it is certainly the duty of children to plead with the mother, so it is the duty of the mother to hearken with great tenderness and sympathy to the petitions and complaints of her children ; and, had this been attended to, they would have seen that it was by no means a season to distract the church of Christ, already too much torn, and divided.

It will perhaps be answered, that they wished to be honest, and let the world see that they are not now in sentiment what they

once were, or appeared to be. I shall readily allow that honesty is laudable among every class of men, especially among clergymen, considering the vast importance of the trust committed to them; but would it not have been honest to have declared their sentiments before taking licence and coming under solemn vows? especially as they had such opportunities of reading John Glas's of Tealing, Dr. William Wishart, formerly a Principal of the University of Edinburgh, and others, on the questions in debate, whose sentiments are disapproved in the Testimony: would they not, when ministers, according to the rules of the church, have transmitted to each Session under the inspection of Synod, a faithful account of their proceedings before any thing new was adopted into a law, as each elder is concerned in the new preamble, as well as intrants into the ministry?—and if they wished to be honest, would they not have allowed their address to the people to bear some resemblance to the vote passed last Synod, and freely speak out what they have in contemplation in private?

Let us however carefully guard against our own spirits, lest an occasion should be given to enemies to blaspheme. If controversies on religious subjects are not managed with temper and moderation, how shall the professing friends of Christ come to see eye to eye in the things of God. The principles of the church of Scotland formerly adhered unto by the ministers of the Secession, were the ad-

miration of other protestant churches, and notwithstanding of the mighty outcry raised now against them, contain in them nothing that cherishes a bigotted zeal, but the reverse: read Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. 26. sect. 2. ; let us, therefore, beware, lest, by giving up rashly, or taking up an evil report against what we profess to have once received, we give way to a more dangerous extreme ; let us in the spirit of meekness, and humility, candidly compare one part with another, before we give way to the testimonies of the avowed enemies of the presbyterial plan of church government.

Let us fear, lest by giving up with these doctrines, which recommend good order and subordination both in church and state, we yield to the opinions of men, which may lead to anarchy and confusion.

While we study to cherish that spirit of love which vaunteth not itself, and doth not behave itself unseemly, let us also try to maintain the profession of our faith without wavering.

Objection. Some will be ready to assert, that in yielding to the alterations begun, they are guilty of no transgression, no breach of vows, &c. as they were indulged by the presbytery they were connected with, to yield to the Confession of Faith, &c. with exceptions.

Answer. What authority had said presbytery to grant such indulgence, without the

concurrence of the supreme court, who never gave up with the formula, in its original form, nor imposed the preamble, by a deed of court, till last Synod? 2d, Allowing the presbytery, under whose inspection they were, for certain ends, granted said indulgence, did not these candidates give an unreserved compliance to the questions of the formula before the people at ordination, who considered them of these sentiments? yea did they not solemnly comply with the formula in the presence of the Searcher of hearts? How can they (without mental reservation, and the grossest dissimulation) refuse that they were of these sentiments? had not the people every reason to believe, that they were honest in what they so solemnly engaged to perform?

2d. Another modern objection started to the old formula, is, that the adherents thereto are ill natured, and ignorant, actuated by a blind zeal; and that there is, and can be no pleasant fellowship in their society.

Answer. It will be acknowledged, that some in the heat of controversy, and fearing lest their privileges should be torn from them, may perhaps have given way, too much, to their own spirit, for which they may see cause to lament before the Lord; but are there not others of these sentiments, possessed of as good tempers, and as willing to follow peace with all men, and holiness, as their accusers. When the Arminian heresy was introduced at first in Hol-

land, every artful attempt was used to represent Calvinism in as odious a light as possible, and to hold out the new scheme in all its pleasant features, till a majority of the students, and clergy, were caught by the alluring bait : but did it follow that the Calvinist scheme was any worse, or ought to be given up with on that account? no verily. Although the friends of our subordinate standards should be treated with contempt, and be exposed to many difficulties and discouragements, let them still, by a prudent zeal, acquit themselves like men, for the cities of the Lord, and the villages of our God, believing, and firmly hoping, that the Lord will see to his own cause. Let such ministers in the synod as would yet wish to be faithful, instead of attempting to blindfold the people with a forbearance, which does not exist, rather acknowledge their mistake, recal their vote, and prove they are hearty in their former profession. When any wound was given to reformation principles at former periods, it was usual to acknowledge the same at after meetings : Go and do so likewise, remembering that it is the glory of a man to acknowledge his transgression.

Objection 3d. The Confession of Faith was received at first by the Church of Scotland with some exception.

Answer. This objection has no foundation in truth, but a vague assertion, else it would have been observed, either in their

formulas, or some other publication ; on the contrary, it was usual for the Church of Scotland, in their best times of reformation, and also in the Secession, till of late, to speak most respectfully of said Confession of Faith, and to give a chearful adherence to it.

2d. Admitting there may be an expression or two with respect to the Magistrates' power, not intelligible to some persons, in the xxiii chapter of said Confession, yet the explication given by the ministers of the Secession in their testimony, is abundantly satisfactory to every one who would not cavil for the sake of cavilling. As intrants into the ministry, and others, may not be fond of that performance ; in order to save time, I shall direct them to the particular spot where they will find the passage, pages 148 and 149, where also the Erastian principles and tenets are disclaimed and rejected with abhorrence. Now, when it is considered that the Confession of Faith is taken in connexion with said testimony, founded on the word of God ; where is the hardship of adhering to it in the very form that the usual questions were put ? Where is the necessity of puzzling and perplexing the minds of the people with disputes on these points, so ably discussed long ago ? Where is the great necessity of a new formula, or its substitute, the preamble, which few or none can understand, but the framers of them ? Would it not have been much wiser to have tried

some method for uniting the friends of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for bringing them to a right understanding one with another, on a regular plan.

Objection 4th. The people have nothing ado with what alterations are made, not being proper judges of what is right or wrong.

Answer. According to this principle, any error, or piece of will-worship may, be introduced ; any truth may be given up at pleasure ; the people are not to complain. Are not the Christian people exhorted to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints ? If they are not allowed to know the faith, how shall they contend for it ?

2d. Were not the people allowed to know what were, or ought to have been their minister's principles, when they promised him all due subjection in the Lord ? and why but they may be allowed a privilege to know if he has altered said principles, either in whole, or in part ? Are they not commanded to try the spirits, whether they are of God, or not ?

After what has happened from the fatal decision last synod, perhaps some may attempt to palliate matters, with a view to pervert the minds of the people by the Synod's address, and give out that they have the same views they ever had ; but although they should for a time live under cover, yet

it is certainly an awful consideration, that the Searcher of all hearts shall find it out.

To the people.—O ye friends of truth! instead of meditating revenge against your brethren, cleaving to their principles, pray for them, and esteem them for their works sake; and instead of rashly taking up an evil report against them, as if they had any wish to divide the heritage of the Lord, which is far from their intentions; try rather to strengthen their hands and encourage their hearts in the work of the Lord, believing that the dispersed of Israel, and the out-casts of Judah, shall be gathered into one; and as there is one shepherd, so in due time there shall be one sheep-fold.

And before you give up with our covenants, which have been so much countenanced in the kind providence of God, both in former and latter periods of the church, carefully read them, examine their matter and contents, with the invaluable ends they were intended to serve; perhaps you will see less cause to listen to the wanton jeers and scoffs used against them.

In order to give an effectual blow to a covenanted work of reformation, some will assert that the favourers of said covenants are of a persecuting spirit, and that compulsory measures have been used to drag people into a compliance with them.

Ans. Few errors have sprung up in the church, but arguments of some kind or other have been used to establish them; but the ob-

jection now stated against our covenants, is perhaps as barefaced a one as ever was used. The reason why so many entered into these covenants, was from a full conviction that it was their duty so to do, and witnessing the Lord's countenance given in so remarkable a way to that work; moreover, they considered them as a valuable means (under the blessing of Divine Providence) of securing the Protestant Religion in these lands from the plots of malignants, papists, &c. but as an evidence that the friends of our covenants did not persecute for conscience sake. They lived in habits of intimacy with the Independents and others, who differed from them in religious sentiments, and so far were they from using compulsory measures, that they never imposed said covenants on the Doctors of Aberdeen, the University of Oxford, nor the whole county of York; and other places could be condescended upon, if necessary. No harsh measures were used against any, if they did not proceed to open hostilities against both their civil and religious liberties, with a view to deprive them of both; did it not then appear to be high time to repel such daring attempts by opposing force to force? Were a band of ruffians to attempt to take from our brethren on the other side of the question every thing dear and valuable in life, would they not try to concert the best means of defence, and even see the necessity of calling in the aid of the civil ma-

gistrate, although for the present they may be reluctant to give him his due? See Messrs. Moncrieff, Walker, and Shirra, on the Duty of Covenanting—To whom I refer the reader for further particulars.

Notwithstanding of the late attempts to compose the minds of the Christian people by a flattering address, those who have had access to the new formula, and its substitute the preamble, will not be easily brought to acknowledge that no change of sentiment has taken place in the Secession Church; but if there is none, why so backward to reconcile differences by the removal of the preamble? To try the experiment could never narrow the terms of church fellowship any more than before such an appendage was put to the formula, nor expose to the odium of being of a persecuting spirit; which charge was never brought against the body formerly, nor can it with any propriety be applied against the friends of our covenants, as we have formerly stated.

It has been alledged that the preamble is harmless and innocent, and no danger is to be dreaded from it: if it is so, the framers of it are not so, else why should they use such severities towards their brethren, adhering to their principles, till they see eye to eye in the things of God? why misrepresent them as schismatics, bigots, &c.? Was the faithful Athanasius a schismatic for adhering to his former views respecting the Divinity of the Son of God, when the rest of the clergy be-

came Arians to a man? Was the Synod of Dort guilty of schism, because they stedfastly maintained the doctrines of free grace, when Arminianism made such a rapid progress? Perhaps it will be answered, the case is not parallel. Have not, however, dangerous opinions found way for themselves from as small beginnings? At any rate, I cannot see how the friends of our principles can be said to be the causers of division. Did they introduce the subject of debate, or ever refuse healing overtures when proposed? Have they not expressed the most earnest wish for amity and concord, on the removal of these stumbling blocks, that have caused the strife? The reader may see there can be no impossibility of removing the preamble, nor dread bad effects from doing so. If this were attended to, who knows but providence might direct to some better methods for uniting the friends of our Lord Jesus Christ, and lead them to a better understanding one with another. Lest any should misunderstand the word *extirpate*, which has been made a handle of to expose the compilers of the Confession, as if they intended to propagate the religion of Jesus by fire and sword, it is abundantly plain that the spirit that diffuses itself through the whole of that valuable book justifies no such insinuation; it only suggests that ministers of the gospel are to use every habile method to convince gainsayers by a diligent and faithful discharge of the duties of their office, and

maintaining the truths of God in purity and simplicity.—When this is done, the evil of Prelacy and Popery will be most effectually exposed, and every evil brought to light—the form of government by Diocesan Bishops on the one hand, and the doctrines that favour anarchy and confusion on the other, will cease to be justified ; persons in love to the truth, as it is in Jesus, will embrace a more regular and scriptural plan of church fellowship. By attending particularly to the expression the reader will see that it is to be used not against persons, but opinions and unscriptural modes of worship. Now, who will venture to assert, that the sword can be used against such in the strictest meaning of the words? Moreover, although it would be exceedingly unsafe to assert that the civil magistrate was to sanction crimes by an authoritative toleration, yet it must be allowed that a permissive toleration of opinions in religious matters, where the rights of conscience are asserted, has been always granted in consistency with our principles, and if said opinions does not endanger the safety and peace of civil society.

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